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THE REPORT OF WENAMON.¹

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This unique document² is our most important source for the position of Egypt in Syria at the close of the Twentieth Dynasty. It belongs to the fifth year of the last of the Ramessids, when he is but the shadow of a king. Hrihor, the high-priest of Amon, although not called king, is in control at Thebes, and Nesubenebbed (Smendes), afterward the first king of the Twenty-first Dynasty, living at Tanis, rules the Delta. Under these circumstances, Hrihor dispatches one of his officials, named Wenamon, to procure cedar from the Lebanon forests, for the construction of a new sacred barque for Amon. In accordance with an oracle of Amon, the messenger was intrusted with a certain image of the god called "Amon-of-the-Way," which he was to take with him as an embassy to the prince of Byblos. As the envoy met with unprecedented difficulties in the execution of his commission, he made out an elaborate report³ on his return home to explain the long series of accidents which had interfered with the success of his mission. Although a large fragment is lacking from the middle of the first column, and the loss of another fragment at the end leaves the narrative unfinished, yet this report is nevertheless one of the most interesting and important documents yet discovered in Egypt.

On the sixteenth of the eleventh month, in the fifth year, probably of Ramses XII., Wenamon left Thebes, and, presenting

¹ The following is a partial preprint of this document, as it will appear in the fourth volume of my *Ancient Records of Egypt*, now being printed by the University of Chicago Press.

² Papyrus found in 1891 by fellahin at El Khibeh, opposite Feshn in Upper Egypt, now in the possession of M. W. Golénischeff, of St. Petersburg. It consists of part of one column and another almost complete. It was published in transcription by M. Golénischeff in a collection of essays in honor of Baron V. de Rosen's jubilee, with a fac-simile of the first twenty-one lines; and again by Golénischeff in revised transcription (*Rec.*, XXI) with translation. It was translated, without alteration of Golénischeff's arrangement of the fragments, by W. M. Müller (*MDVG.*, 1900, 1); and by Erman (*AZ.*, XXXVIII, 1-14) with a rearrangement of the fragments which seems to me unquestionably correct. The following translation owes much to Erman.

³ That our document is Wenamon's authentic report there seems to me, after a study of its characteristics, not the slightest doubt; but there is not space here to discuss the question. See Erman (*AZ.*, XXXVIII, 2), who reaches the same conclusion.

his credentials to Nesubenebbed at Tanis, he was kindly received. Fifteen days after leaving Thebes (on the first of the twelfth month), he sailed from Tanis (?) into the Mediterranean, in a merchant ship, commanded by a Syrian. Arrived at Dor, the gold and silver which he had brought with him as payment for the timber was stolen from him. Dor was now a petty kingdom of the Thakkara, who, with the Pursata-Philistines, had begun entering Syria under Ramses III., seventy-five or eighty years before. They had constantly pushed southward after their defeat by Ramses III. in his eighth year, and had settled along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean as subjects of the Pharaoh. After the death of Ramses III., they must soon have gained their independence. The Thakkara chief of Dor gives Wenamon little satisfaction for the loss of his valuables, and after waiting nine days he sails northward to Tyre.

The account of the voyage from Dor to Tyre is lost in a lacuna. On the way from Tyre to Byblos, he in some way met some of the Thakkara with a bag (?) of silver. It weighed thirty deben, and, as he had lost thirty-one⁴ deben of silver, he seized it, as security. He arrived at Byblos four months and twelve days after his departure from Thebes, but, as he came in an ordinary merchant ship, and not in a special ship of Nesubenebbed, and was without rich gifts and the customary externals of former Egyptian envoys, Zakar-Baal, the prince of Byblos, would not receive him, and ordered him to leave. After nineteen days, one of the noble youths in attendance upon the prince fell into a prophetic frenzy and demanded that Wenamon and his god, "Amon-of-the-Way," be summoned and honorably treated.

About to return to Egypt, Wenamon was summoned to Zakar-Baal's palace, but, being without money and without credentials, which he had foolishly left with Nesubenebbed at Tanis—having only the above-mentioned image of Amon supposed to confer "life and health," but not likely to impress the Syrian—he was treated with scant respect. The claims of Hrihor and of Amon upon the Lebanon were scouted, and Zakar-Baal proved from his records that his fathers had been paid for their timber. Wenamon therefore sends to Nesubenebbed for money, and the Byblite shows his good-will by dispatching to Egypt at once the heavy timbers of the hull. The messenger returned from Nesubenebbed

⁴About seven and one-half pounds Troy.

within forty-eight days (perhaps only nineteen or twenty days), with partial payment for the timber desired, whereupon Zakar-Baal sent three hundred men and three hundred oxen, to fell and bring the rest of the timber.

Some eight months after Wenamon left Thebes the timber was ready. Zakar-Baal delivers it to him, and with grim humor tells him that he has been better treated than the last envoys from Egypt, who were detained at Byblos seventeen years and died there. The prince charges an attendant to conduct Wenamon to their tomb, and show it to him. But Wenamon demurs and takes his leave, promising to see that the balance due on the timber is paid. As he is about to sail, a number of Thakkara ships appear, for the purpose of arresting him, doubtless for his seizure of the silver. The unlucky Wenamon sits down upon the beach and weeps, while Zakar-Baal, hearing of his plight, sends him reassuring messages, with food, drink, and a female singer. In the morning the prince interviews the Thakkara and sends Wenamon to sea. In some way he evades the Thakkara, but is driven by a contrary wind to Cyprus (Alashia), where he is about to be killed by the Cyprians, when he finds someone who speaks Egyptian, succeeds in gaining the favor of the Cyprian queen, and is spared.

Here the remarkable report is broken off, and how Wenamon reached Egypt we do not know. It will be seen that in the Lebanon region, once conquered and controlled by the Pharaohs, they are no longer feared. Thus at the close of the Twentieth Dynasty Egypt, while respected as a source of civilization, cannot secure even ordinary protection and civility for her messengers in Syria, and this state of affairs had already existed, probably as early as the reign of Ramses IX., a generation earlier.

Besides the earliest instance of prophetic ecstasy known to us, the document contains also another significant datum, viz., the princes of Byblos had for two generations been keeping their daily business records in a book or roll (^{or}). Moreover, among the gifts brought to the prince of Byblos from the Delta were five hundred rolls of papyrus paper. Of course, the Phœnician *did not write cuneiform* with pen and ink upon these rolls; for a script worse suited to such writing materials than cuneiform can hardly be imagined. It is evident that he wrote upon papyrus the hieratic hand customarily written upon it in Egypt, *the only*

method of writing then known, which contained alphabetic signs for the whole alphabet. It thus becomes clear that by 1100 B.C. the cuneiform had been displaced in Phœnicia, and before the tenth century the Phœnician scribes, discarding the innumerable syllabic signs of the Egyptian hieratic, had accustomed themselves to employ only its alphabetic signs.

The following conventional signs are used in the translation:

1. Everything inclosed in () is editorial explanation.
2. Everything in [] is restoration of lost words.
3. Everything in [] is restoration of the probable content of a lost passage, but not a restoration of the lost words.
4. Everything in [] is uncertain.
5. [] means an uncertain word; [] means two uncertain words, etc.
6. - means a lost word; - - two lost words, etc.

¹Year 5,^a 3d month of the 3d season (11th month), day 16, day of the departure of the "eldest of the hall," of the house of Amon, ²[the lord of the lands, Wenamon, to bring the timber for the great and august barque of Amon-Re, king of gods, which is on [the river] - - - (called): "Userhet"^b of Amon.

On the day of my arrival at Tanis (*Dⁿ*), at the 'place of abode of Nesubenebbed (*Ns-sw-b'-nb-dd*)^c and Tentamon, I gave to them the writings of Amon-Re, king of gods, which they 'caused to be read in their presence; and they said: "I will do (it), I will do (it) according to that which Amon-Re, king of gods our 'lord, saith." I abode until the 4th month of the 3d season,^d being in Tanis.

Nesubenebbed and ⁷Tentamon sent me with the ship-captain Mengebet (*M-n-g-b-ty*), and I descended into ⁸the great Syrian (*H'-rw*) sea, in the 4th month of the 3d season, on the 1st day. I arrived at Dor, a city of ⁹Thakkara (*T'-k'-r*), and Bedel (*B'-dy-r'*), its king, caused to be brought for me much bread, a jar of wine,¹⁰ and a joint of beef.

Then a man of my ship fled, having stolen:^e

—[vessels] of gold, ¹¹ amounting to	5 deben;
4 vessels of silver, amounting to	20 deben;
A sack of silver	11 deben
¹² [Total of what] he [stole]	5 deben of gold
	31 deben of silver ^f

^aThat this date must refer to Ramses XII. was shown by Erman (*ÄZ.*, XXXVIII, 2).

^bThe name of the barque of Amon; see, *e. g.*, Papyrus, Harris, VII, 6.

^cGreek Smendes; part of the name is here broken out, and the reading is taken from l. 6.

^dFourteen days after his departure from Thebes.

^eThe names of the articles of gold are broken out.

^fAbout one and one-fifth pounds of gold and about seven and one-half pounds of silver.

^{x+1}———^a “if they sail, let them take *me* to Egypt.” — I spent 19 days in his [harbor], and he continually sent to me daily saying:

“Betake thyself away from my harbor.”

Now when he sacrificed to his gods —, the god seized one of his noble youths (^c*dd*), making him frenzied, so that he said: “Bring [the god] hither!^b Bring the messenger of Amon who hath him. ^{x+5}Send him and let him go.”

Now while the frenzied (youth) continued in frenzy during this night, I found a ship bound for Egypt and I loaded in all my belongings into it. I waited for the darkness, saying: “When it descends I will embark the god also, in order that no other eye may see him.”

The harbor-master came to me, saying: “Remain until morning by the king.” I said to him: “Art not thou he who continually came to me, daily, saying: ‘Betake thyself away from my harbor’? Dost thou not say, ‘Remain in the [land¹], ^{x+10}in order to let depart the ship that I have found? that thou mayest come and say again, ‘Away!’” He went and told it to the king, and the king sent to the captain of the ship, saying: “Remain until morning by the king.”

When morning came he sent and had me brought up, when the divine offering occurred in the fortress wherein he was, on the shore of the sea. I found him sitting in his upper chamber, leaning his back against a window, while the waves of the great Syrian sea beat against the — ^{x+15}behind him. I said to him: “‘Kindness¹ of Amon!’” He said to me: “How long is it until this day since thou camest (away) from the abode of Amon?” I said: “Five months and one day, until now.”

He said to me: “Behold, if thou art true, where is the writing of Amon, which is in thy hand? Where is the letter of the high-priest of Amon, which is in thy hand?” I said to him: “I gave them to Nesubenebbed and Tentamon.” Then he was very wroth, and he said to me: “Now behold, the writing and the letter are not in thy hand! Where is the ship of cedar, which Nesubenebbed gave to thee? Where is ^{x+20}its Syrian crew? He would not deliver thy business to this ship-captain [—] [—] to have thee killed, that they might cast thee into the sea. From whom would they have sought the god then? And thee, from whom would they have sought thee then?” So spake he to me. I said to him:

“There are indeed Egyptian ships and Egyptian crews who sail under Nesubenebbed, (but) he hath no Syrian crews.” He said to me: “There are surely 20 ships here in my harbor, which are in connection with Nesubenebbed; and at this Sidon, ‘whither thou also ‘wouldst go’, there are indeed 10,000 ships also which are in connection ²with Berket-El^d (*W’-r’-k-ty-r’*) and sail to his house.”

^a The lacuna here doubtless includes several lines, but is not so large as the one before III; see note p. 104, above. The uncertain line numbering I have inserted only every five lines for this fragment.

^b Lit “up.” In ecstasy the youth demands the summoning of Wenamon and his image of Amon, and that they be honorably treated and dismissed.

^c This would be the twelfth of the fourth month.

^d Erman thinks this must be some great Phœnician merchant resident in Tanis, and the parallelism certainly points clearly to some one in Tanis.

Then I was silent in this great hour. ³He answered and said to me: "On what business hast thou come hither?" I said to him: "I have come 'after the timber for the great and august barque of Amon-Re, king of gods. Thy father did it, ⁵thy grandfather did it, and thou wilt also do it.'" So spake I to him.

He said to me: "They did it truly. ⁶If thou give me (something) for doing it, I will do it. Indeed, my agents transacted the business; ⁷the Pharaoh L. P. H. sent 6 ships, laden with the products of Egypt, and they were unloaded into their ⁸store-houses. And thou also shalt bring something for *me*." He had brought in the journals of his fathers, ⁹and he had them read before me. They found 1,000 deben of every (kind of) silver, which was in his book.

¹⁰He said to me: "If the ruler of Egypt were the owner of my property, and I were also his servant, ¹¹he would not send silver and gold saying: 'Do the command of Amon.' It was not the payment ¹²of 'tribute'^a which they exacted of my father. As for me, I am myself neither thy ¹³servant, nor am I the servant of him that sent thee. If I cry out to the ¹⁴Lebanon, the heavens open, and the logs lie here on the shore of the sea."

"Give ¹⁵me the sails which thou hast brought to propel thy ships which bear thy logs to [Egypt]. ¹⁶Give me the cordage [¹⁷'which thou hast brought to bind¹'] the trees which I fell, in order to make them 'fast¹ for thee ¹⁷—— I make them for thee 'into' the sails of thy ¹⁸ships, and the tops are (too) heavy and they break, and thou die in the midst of the sea ¹⁹when Amon thunders in heaven, and puts Sutekh in his time."

"For Amon ²⁰equips all lands; he equips them, having first equipped the land of Egypt, whence thou comest. ²¹For artisanship came forth from it, to reach my place of abode; and teaching came forth ²²from it to reach my place of abode. What (then) are these miserable journeys which they have had thee make!"

I said to him: ²³"O guilty one! They are no miserable journeys on which I am. There is no ship upon the river ²⁴which Amon does not own. For his is the sea, and his is Lebanon of which thou sayest, 'It is mine, It ^b ²⁵grows for 'Userhet' (the barque) of Amon, the lord of every ship. Yea, so spake Amon-Re, king of gods, saying to ²⁶Hrihor, my lord, 'Send me,' and he made me go bearing this great god. But behold, thou hast let ²⁷this great god wait twenty-nine^c days, when he had landed [in] thy harbor, although thou didst certainly know he was here. He is indeed (still) what ²⁸he (once) was, while thou standest and bargainest for the Lebanon with Amon, its lord. As for what thou sayest, that the ²⁹former kings sent silver and gold, if they had given life and health, they would not have sent the valuables; ³⁰(but) they sent the

^a *Mrk* for *brk* (?) *F*" = "pay" is common. Erman suggests that *mrk* is connected with *melek*, "king," but *f* seems to me to make this interpretation difficult.

^b Lebanon.

^c This was four months and twelve days after leaving Thebes; he must therefore have reached Byblos three months and thirteen days after leaving Thebes.

valuables [to] thy fathers instead of life and health. Now as for Amon-Re, king of gods, he is the ³¹lord of life and health, and he was the lord of thy fathers, who spent their lifetime offering ³²to Amon.^a And thou also, thou art the servant of Amon. If thou sayest to Amon, 'I will do (it), I will do (it),' and thou executest his ³³command, thou shalt live, and thou shalt be prosperous, and thou shalt be healthy, and thou shalt be pleasant to thy whole land and thy people. Wish not ³⁴for thyself a thing belonging to Amon-Re, [king of] gods. Yea, the lion loves his own."

"Let my scribe be brought to me, that I may send ³⁵him to Nesubenebbed and Tentamon, the rulers whom Amon hath given to the north of his land, ³⁶and they will send all that, of which I shall write to them, saying: 'Let it be brought;' until I return to the south and ³⁷send thee all, all thy trifles again." So spake I to him.

He gave my letter into the hand of his messenger. He loaded in the 'keel'^b ³⁸the head of the bow and the head of the stern, with four other hewn timbers, together seven; and he had them taken to Egypt. ³⁹His messenger went to Egypt, and returned to me, to Syria in the first month of the second season.^c Nesubenebbed and Tentamon sent:

⁴⁰Gold: 4 *Tb*-vessels, 1 *K'k-mn*-vessel;
Silver: 5 *Tb*-vessels;
Royal linen: 10 garments, 10 '*hm-brd*';
Papyrus: ⁴¹500 rolls;
Ox hides: 500;
Rope: 500 (coils);
Lentils: 20 measures;
Fish: 30 measures (*mst'*).

She^d sent me:

Linen: ⁴²5 -, 5 '*hm-brd*';
Lentils: 1 measure;
Fish: 5 measures (*mst'*).

The king rejoiced and detailed ⁴³three hundred men and three hundred oxen, placing overseers over them, to have the trees felled. They spent the second season therewith ⁴⁴1. In the 3d month of the second season* (7th month) they dragged them [to] the shore of the sea. The chief came forth and stood by them.

He sent to me, ⁴⁵saying: "Come." Now when I had presented myself before him, the shadow of his sunshade fell upon me. Penamon, ⁴⁶a butler, he stepped between me, saying: "The shadow of Pharaoh, L.P.H. thy lord, falls upon thee." He^f was angry ⁴⁷with him, saying: "Let

* Ramses III. built a temple of Amon in Phœnicia; Thutmose III. gave three cities of the southern Lebanon district to Amon; Zakar-Baal had a butler named Penamon, and there is no doubt that Wenamon's statement was correct.

^b *Pypy-t*, determined with a piece of wood. The three principal timbers of the ship are undoubtedly mentioned here.

• Within forty-eight days of the date of his departure (twelfth of the fourth month).

^d Tentamon sent him a personal present.

^e Some eight months after he left Thebes.

^f The chief of Byblos.

him alone!" I presented myself before him and he answered and said to me: "Behold, the command which my ⁴⁸fathers formerly executed, I have executed, although thou for thy part hast not done for me that which thy fathers did for me. Behold, there has arrived ⁴⁹the last of thy timber, and there it lies. Do according to my desire and come to load it, for they will indeed give it to thee."

⁵⁰"Come not to contemplate the terror of the sea, (but) if thou dost contemplate the terror of the sea, thou shalt (also) contemplate ⁵¹my own. Indeed I have not done to thee that which they did to the messengers of Khamwese,^a when they spent seventeen years ⁵²in this land. They died in their place."^b He said to his butler: "Take him and let him see their tomb, wherein they ⁵³sleep."

I said to him: "Let me not see it! As for Khamwese, people were the messengers whom he sent to thee; but people ⁵⁴— there was no [god among] his messengers. And yet thou sayest, 'Go and see thy companions.' Lo, art thou not glad, ⁵⁵and dost thou not have made for thee a tablet, whereon thou sayest: 'Amon-Re, king of gods, sent to me 'Amon-of-the-Way,' his ⁵⁶[divine] messenger, and Wenamon, his human messenger, after the timber for the great and august barque of Amon-Re, king of gods. I felled it, ⁵⁷I loaded it, I supplied him (with) my ships and my crews, I brought them to Egypt, to beseech for me ⁵⁸10,000 years of life from Amon, more than my ordained (life), and it came to pass.' Then in future days when a messenger comes ⁵⁹from the land of Egypt, who is able to write, and reads thy name upon the stela, thou shalt receive water in the west, like the gods who are ⁶⁰there." He said to me: "It is a great testimony which thou tellest me."

I said to him: "As for the many things which thou hast said to me, when I reach ⁶¹the place of abode of the high-priest of Amon, and he shall see thy command in thy command,^c [he] will have something delivered to thee."

⁶²I went to the shore of the sea, to the place where the timbers lay; I spied eleven ships ⁶³coming from the sea, belonging to the Thakkara, saying:^d "Arrest him! Let not a ship ⁶⁴of his (pass) to Egypt!" I sat down and began to weep. The letter-scribe of the chief came out to me ⁶⁵and said to me: "What is the matter with thee?" I said to him: "Surely thou seest these birds which twice descend upon Egypt. ⁶⁶Behold them! They come to the pool, and how long^e shall I be

^aWho this Khamwese was is not entirely certain. Erman recalls the occurrence of Khamwese as part of the name in the cartouche of Ramses IX., and it is not improbable that he is meant, for, as the messengers have been dead some time, and this document is dated in the fifth year of Ramses XII., they must have left Egypt some twenty-five years earlier, which would certainly carry us back into the reign of Ramses IX.

^bThis phrase "in their place" in connection with dying must have some particular meaning. It is frequently so used in the inscription of Ramses III., and of the conspirators against him, who committed suicide; but its idiomatic force is not clear.

^cThe text is translated verbatim; but is perhaps corrupt.

^dThe report, otherwise so full, abbreviates here; he means that they were under orders, of which he introduces the purport by the word "saying."

^eLit. "until what comes."

here, forsaken? For thou seest surely those who come ⁶⁷to arrest me again.”^a

He went and told it to the chief. The chief began to weep at the evil words which they spoke to him. ⁶⁸He sent out his letter-scribe to me, he brought me two jars of wine and a ram. He sent ⁶⁹to me Tentno (*Tynt-nwt*), an Egyptian singer (fem.) who was with him, saying: “Sing for him; let not his heart take notions.” He sent to me, ⁷⁰saying: “Eat, drink, and let not thy heart take notions. Thou shalt hear all that I have to say in the morning.”

Morning ⁷¹came, he had (the Thakkara) called into his ‘—’, he stood in their midst and said to the Thakkara: “Why have ye come?” ⁷²They said to him: “We have come after the stove-up ships which thou sendest to Egypt with our ‘—’ comrades.” ⁷³He said to them: “I cannot arrest the messenger of Amon in my land. Let me send him away, and ye shall pursue him ⁷⁴to arrest him.”

He loaded me on board, he sent me away—to the harbor of the sea. The wind drove me to the land of ⁷⁵Alashia (‘-r’-s’); those of the city came forth to me to slay me. I was brought among them to the abode of Hatiba (*H’-ty-b’*), ⁷⁶the queen of the city. I found her as she was going forth from one of her houses and entering into her other. I ⁷⁷saluted her, I asked the people who stood about her: “There is surely one among you who understands Egyptian?” One ⁷⁸among them said: “I understand (it).” I said to him: “Say to my mistress: ‘I have heard as far as Thebes, the abode of Amon, that ⁷⁹in every city injustice is done, but that justice is done in the land of Alashia; (but) lo, injustice is done every day here.’” She said: “Indeed! What is ⁸⁰this that thou sayest?” I said to her: “If the sea raged and the wind drove me to the land where I am, ⁸¹thou wilt not let them take ‘advantage of’ me to slay me; I being a messenger of Amon. I am one for whom they will seek ⁸²unceasingly. As for the crew of the prince of Byblos, whom they sought to kill, their lord will surely find ⁸³ten crews of thine, and he will slay them, on his part.” She had the people called and stationed (before her); she said to me: “Pass the night ——.”

^aThis word points to earlier trouble with the Thakkara, and doubtless explains the “twice” above.